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AUTHOR Durfee, Mary
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ABSTRACT

Policy makers use past experience and history to think about current and potential problems and to explain policies and problems to others. Decision makers may be overly influenced by significant personally-experienced events that loom so large in their eyes that details and related relevant information may pale in comparison. Deficiencies in content or logic may ultimately not matter in the quality or political efficacy of a lesson, but need to be assessed along with the context and effect of the lesson to establish a complete assessment of that lesson and the role the lesson played in the decision making process. Learning can be said to have taken place with regard to examination of a historically based lesson if that experience leads to change or altered policies. This requires that a baseline be established on what relevant policy makers believed about the world prior to the event. Decision makers do not use history all that poorly when the political context and the actual content of lessons are taken into account. Decision makers do pay attention to current context and that context, not the past, heavily influences the uses of the past. The evidence for the ways to look at lessons from the past are largely drawn from the case of Pearl Harbor and its influence on U.S. post-war defense policy. A list of 28 references is included. (PPB)

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How to Evaluate Lessons From the Past with Illustrations from the Case of Pearl Harbor

Mary Durfee
Department of Political Science
University of Dayton
Dayton, OH 45469-0001

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Everyone recognizes that policymakers use past experience to think about current and potential problems and to explain policies and problems to others. The sheer ubiquity of references to the past in documents, speeches, and the press makes it doubtful that the past has no impact on policy. As Ambassador Nitze put it to me, "One can't have foreign policy without the past." Richard Neustadt and Ernest May even suggest that decisionmakers should use more history to improve decisions (1986). But against the evidence that history matters are the numerous examples where decisionmakers used history without a great deal of thought or used the past, as A.J.P. Taylor claimed, "'to prop up their own prejudices'" (Jervis, 1976, p 217).

The evidence for poor learning is of two types: the outcomes of events and extrapolations of findings from psychological experiments to political decisionmaking. More precisely, poor outcomes are now often interpreted in terms of psychological concepts. When decisions turn out poorly, scholars tend to research them extensively; successes rarely merit such attention. In the process the mistakes decisionmakers make receive extra attention. One point that sometimes comes out of such efforts is that decisions are often were based on incomplete information and that more history might have helped fill it in.

These findings, along with Taylor's complaint, can be accounted for in terms of cognitive consistency; motivational bias; and decision heuristics, such as availability, representativeness, and statistical base rate error.* Any transfer of concepts from psychology, however, ought to be treated with great caution. Real-world decisionmaking and artificially contrived decisions are not highly comparable. Funder (1987), Neisser (1982), and Fodor (1983), all psychologists, offer critiques of their field on this matter; Lebow, Stein and Cohen (forthcoming) demonstrate the theoretical inadequacies of the consistency approach.

Political decisions have more dimensions to them than psychology can handle, if only because they cross the boundaries of psycho-linguistics, cognitive psychology, and social psychology. Thus political scientists--particularly if they hope to keep the politics in the political psychology--must devise their own accounting of how decisionmaking happens. My aim in this paper is to offer ways of considering how the past is used by policymakers. The paper does not purport to be a theory of decisionmaking; it relates only to the uses of history in decision and policy making.

* On consistency, see Jervis, 1976, Lebow, 1981. On motivational bias see Janis and Mann, 1977; Lebow, 1981. Decisional heuristics are addressed by Tversky and Kahnemann, 1971, 1972 and Nisbett and Ross, 1980.

The evidence for the ways to look at lessons from the past are largely drawn from the case of Pearl Harbor and its influence on American post-war defense policy. That means the distinctions I include were, for the most part, made inductively rather than deductively. Another methodological matter should be noted here as well. My case has almost never been used in a crisis situation, unlike the analogy of Munich. Whether this matters for the classifications I offer is open to test.

Learning, Poor Learning, and Rhetoric

Robert Jervis (1976) says that decisionmakers are overly swayed by big, personally-experienced events. These loom so large that fine details are lost and other relevant events are "shouted down", so to speak, in memory. As a consequence, lessons over-simplify, over-generalize and over-value experience. He wrote of decisionmakers, "They often mistake things that are highly spicific and situation-bound for more general characteristics because they assume that the most salient aspects of the results were caused by the most salient aspects of the preceding situation. people pay more attention to <u>what</u> has happened that to <u>why</u> it has happened. Thus learning is superficial, overgenerialized, and based on post hoc ergo propter hoc reasoning. As a result, the lessons learned will be applied to a wide variety of situations without a careful effort to determine whether the cases are similar on crucial dimensions (p.228).

Two brief examples may help illustrate the points above. Churchill resisted efforts to launch amphibious operations during WWII in part because of his disastrous experience at Gallipolli during WWI; this perhaps delayed unnecessarily the invasion of Western Europe. Neustadt and May point out that Carter, thinking the Presidency's of Johnson and Kennedy were typical, might have done better in the opening months of this administration had he carefully assessed his assumption that he would have a "honeymoon" period with Congress (1986).

Sometimes lessons do seem superficial and overgeneralized--results psychology would expect under some conditions. Simplification and generalization seem to be what the mind is all about; without that capacity we would be overwhelmed with sensory input. Memory does it for us (See the range from Craik and Lockhart (1972) to the AI model of Hintzman, 1986).

It is also the result one gets when one learns. Learning happens when a) one gets a rule where there was none before and b) when, through overgeneralization of the rule, one finds out it does not work. So, overgeneralization may or may not be poor learning. The critical test is to look at an instance one believes to be overgeneralization and then see what the learner does with the rule in another case.

If salience matters and leads to learning and overgeneralization, then why are some seemingly obvious lessons not learned? For instance, Jervis thought it strange

that nobody seemed particularly concerned about getting timely warning of attack even after the experience of Pearl Harbor. "One would have expected the experience of Pearl Harbor to sensitize American decision-makers to the danger of surprise attack. Yet, at the start of the Cold War, and indeed until the mid-1950's, the United States did not carefully guard against a sneak attack....Even though all the protection that was needed was an early warning system to provide enough time for the bombs to be dispersed...the United States had only four radar stations in operation in 1947, and these were working only part-time (Jervis, 1976-224-25)." Jervis happens to be incorrect in his statement that decisionmakers were not concerned about surprise, but it is--at least on the surface--odd that there was no push for more radar.

But that is only the surface. The result can be explained bureaucratically or psychologically--or both. Pearl Harbor brought the Air Force to center stage in the defense of the United States. And the center of the Air Force was the Strategic Air Command. SAC believed in bombers; SAC believed the best defense was an offense. Quite simply, SAC did not want to spend money on defense. The Air Defense Command and NORAD, once created, were subordinate to SAC planning and assumptions. A simple psychological explanation, but one that flies in the face of the overgeneralization hypothesis, is that there was nothing to warn against until the 1950s. The Soviets had neither long-range bombers nor intercontinental missiles; the real-world context mattered for the problem of warning. Thus, the combined explanation is that SAC had every reason to believe that it could retaliate no matter what. Only as an actual Soviet threat began to emerge did concern about warning really emerge. And at that point policy debates started to include new and conflicting lessons of Pearl Harbor.

What about Taylor's complaint that history props up prejudices? Is all use of history a matter of rhetoric? Pearl Harbor was certainly used by different organizations to support their programmatic desires. The same event thus led different organizations and individuals to learn contradictory lessons. One lesson set out by advocates of airpower was that the way to prevent surprise attacks like Pearl Harbor was to create a large, ready-to-attack air force. But they had made a similar claim before Pearl Harbor ever happened. The Army claimed one could prevent Pearl Harbors by having a ready army--again this represented a view they had held for some time. This use of the past would hardly surprise anyone familiar with bureaucratic politics and looks like good rhetoric. What is surprising is that the Navy did not talk about Pearl Harbor, even though they had the strongest lesson: aircraft carriers should be increased to protect against enemy sea-based air. Of course, the Navy did make that claim, but not with a reference to Pearl Harbor; they used Midway as their icon.

Nor is this all. The political outcomes were different. No one believed the Army's use of Pearl Harbor; almost everyone adopted the Air Force's concept. A contingent in Congress kept their client, the Navy, in ships despite the evidence at the time that there did not seem to be much work for the Navy anymore.

Let's consider one last case of using the past before getting to the assessment task and ask if it was good learning, poor learning, or rhetoric. The Cuban Missile Crisis decisionmakers used references to the past and the outcome turned out well. Kennedy thought of WWI and the interwar period. His brother introduced Pearl Harbor into the deliberations. Ernest May commends them for the wider historical range of their lessons. The broader sweep of history may well have opened and closed options to the benefit of all concerned.

Yet, it is not clear why WWI or Pearl Harbor were good analogies. The slide to war in July 1914 entailed a series of miscalculations by a number of different countries; only two were involved in Cuba. There were no nuclear weapons in 1914; that was the point of the Cuban crisis. The Germans had well-developed offensive plans for their forces, which were matched by those of France and Russia; in Cuba, the Soviets had no local predominance of force and may have been attempting to secure a marginally better strategic balance with the United States. As for Pearl Harbor, Dean Acheson himself attacked the analogy in an ExCom meeting, in effect saying that the notion of a "Pearl Harbor in reverse" was analogical nonsense. That demonstration of the logical and factual errors of the analogy notwithstanding, the policymakers did change behaviors in light of the Pearl Harbor (and eve of WWI) analogy.

The notion of references to the past as rhetoric generally seems to be and extension of the sort Taylor raised. The reference props up a prejudice or a preferred course of action. Presumably it does not actually structure the way the speaker imagines the situation. But, even supposing Robert Kennedy was just trying to use the analogy to divert attention from the surprise air strike, the fact of the matter was that <u>other people</u> found it helpful in restructuring their problem. Perhaps, as Janis (1972) has noted, its strongest point had nothing to do with the facts of the past and the present case, but with the moral implications of the actions they were deliberating upon. In my view, then, the idea that a rhetorical use of the past is not a "real" or a "good" use of the past holds little water. The entire point of rhetoric is to persuade or inspire; if others change their minds, then the past has helped shape the present no matter what the speaker's relationship with the lesson might be.

Similarly, this example illustrates how deficiencies in content and logic may ultimately not matter in the quality or political efficacy of a lesson. They are elements that should be included in an assessment of lessons, but the

context and the effects of the lesson need to be considered as well. Political lessons of the past are public; they are directed to a public end. That means the lessons are for a purpose. And that in turn means that history does not create political lessons; policymakers do.

How to Assess Lessons

The first thing the researcher must decide is whether to make the case that learning has occurred or to identify the uses of lessons in public debate. There is a world of difference between the two. The former, of necessity, is about change over time. The latter could be about recurrent patterns of political discourse or about the ideological structure of policy debate. Both produce important political outcomes and no doubt overlap at points. But the case for learning has data requirements above those that the uses approach has.

Zimmerman and Axelrod (1981) conducted a content analysis on Soviet lessons of Viewnam based on articles from a wide range of magazines and newspapers. They counted hundreds of and persuasively argued that there were significant ideological differences between the different publications, reflecting in turn different policy preferences among Soviet policy-makers and intellectuals. Their discussion of these ideological and bureaucratic differences, drawn from the lessons learned, has been borne out by events. The 'doves' they identified in their research are now, in fact, in Gorbachev's brain trust, and policy is taking on hues consonant with the schools of thought Zimmerman and Axelrod had suggested might develop.

Their analysis, at that point, was not about learning in the sense that I use the term learning. To make that case, they would have had to show what the relevant writers believed about force, national liberation movements, and so forth before the U.S. got so deeply involved in Vietnam. Then, the authors would have had to show that lessons from Vietnam led to new conceptualizations of the political world. The data base they created, however, is clear enough to assess ensuing learning about force, etc.

Zimmerman and Axelrod defined a lesson as "'an explicit policy-relevant statement that is based on experience that has at least an implied applicability to later events'" (p 6). This definition has much to commend itself. First, it makes clear that a lesson the past needs to be explicit and based on experience, although there are levels of explicitness, as we shall see. Second it recognizes that political learning must be relevant to policy. The "implied applicability to later events" is perhaps unnecessary. The writers are already trying to solve a problem or promote a solution, thus the applicability comes with the lesson.

The definition leaves hanging two particularly vexing counting problems due to its demand for an explicit policy-relevant statement. Although clear statements like "aircraft should not be parked wingtip to wingtip to avoid destruction

in a Pearl Harbor-type surprise attack are the ideal lesson format, references to the past may also be present in two other settings. First, the overall structure of an argument can bear striking similarities to the original event, but there is no direct reference. Second, an author talking about another person's argument may bring up the event even though the other person did not, thus raising the problem of dealing with both the direct and the implied connections.

It would be difficult to notice the first setting if one has no knowledge of the source (original) event. Therefore, a brief event history needs to be developed prior to any search for lessons. The event or source history is best gained by reading a number of general histories and then writing a brief description of what happened. For Pearl Harbor, for instance, I began with Prange (1981, 1986) and Roberta Wohlstetter (1962). The point of this, of course, is not to write history, but to establish a rough baseline as to what happened in the past event, according to contemporary and modern accounts, so that the researcher can recognize analogical references to the event even when the name of the event is left out. This data also will assist the researcher later in assessing the content quality of lessons.

Here is an example of a structural reference to Pearl Harbor. A report by Air Chief of Staff, Gen. Spaatz to the Secretary of the Air Force in 1947 had the following passage: The United States should be ready and determined

> "to take prompt and effective military action abroad to anticipate and prevent attack. When it becomes evident that forces of aggression are being arrayed against us by a potential enemy, we cannot afford, through any misguided and perilous idea of avoiding an aggressive attitude to permit the first blow to be struck against us. Our government, under such conditions, should press the issue to a prompt political decision, while making all preparations to strike the first blow if necessary." (Vandenberg Papers pg 29)

Although there is no direct reference to Pearl Harbor, a number of points suggest the connection. First, of course, is the concern with getting hit first, at the very start of the war. This had not been a problem prior to WWII. Second, is the notion of increasing tensions as expressed in "forces of aggression arrayed against us," which does describe the drawn out setting of US Japanese relations--although it could also describe the deterioration of political conditions in general before WWII. Next is the point of avoiding an aggressive attitude. Some people felt Roosevelt had been too anxious about not giving Japan a reason for war. There is also an explicit action statement: hit first if necessary.

The second situation, which I will call an issue reference, entails, as noted above, a situation where one author (hereafter A) is discussing the view of another writer

or policymaker (hereafter B) on a given problem. Evidently B did not actually refer to the source event with respect to the general problem, but A raises the specter of the event. I suggest giving more weight to the direct reference, but also flagging or giving a weighted count to the general topic as one that may have strong implicit connections to the source event. In other words, other policymakers may also have the event in mind or, at the very least, readily recognize the relevance of the past event to the current problem.

Since context and purpose matter in political lesson making, additional information, when available, should also be recorded. I suggest the following be included: who said it and in what setting. Knowing who said it (individual is easier to handle than bureaucratic, but organizational lessons are legitimate game, in my view) may permit an analysis of schools of thought like that offered by Zimmerman and Axelrod.

The setting has a number of important components to it. First, where did the reference occur? A formerly classified document is a very different medium than a popular newspaper or radio address. Second, what political problem was the article or document addressing when the reference was made? Third, who was the intended audience--fellow bureaucrats, Congress, the public? Fourth, was the reference used in a setting of crisis or routine policymaking? And last, were there references to other specific events mentioned in conjuction with the source event under study? In the defense documents I read, Pearl Harbor is almost always used alone. Only on two occassions did it co-occur with its close diplomatic neighbor, Munich. One should cross reference any other historical analogies. The presence of other analogies weakens the case that the particular historical event one is studying had a strong impact on policy, but it strengthens the case for sound decisionmaking. The more historical references, the better the chances that decisionmakers are trying out a variety of images to give shape to a current problem.

Baselines

With the information collected so far, one can identify types of lessons and schools of thought. One could also get a good feel for the political problems typically associated with a given event. In the case of Pearl Harbor, I know that surprise attack, vulnerability, organization of the defense establishment are problems likely to conjure up December 7, 1941. But the information would not say anything about whether decisionmakers have learned from the event. Learning as I am using it hear, means change caused by an experience. Political learning consequently should be reflected in altered policy and/or in the categories in which the political world is divided after the event.

To make the case for learning, one must get a baseline on what relevant policymakers believed about the world prior to the event. This baseline, of necessity, must be built up through a back and forth movement from the data collected on references to the source event and important pre-event statements by the same, or functionally similar, actors. The quickest way to get started is to check the information on the "problem" begin addressed when a reference to the past is made. Since policy debates rarely disappear entirely, the political problems connected with the post-event era may prove helpful guides to important viewpoints of the pre-event

period. The better one can outline the thrust of the main points of policy disagreement, the better one will be able to assess the degree and direction of learning.

Consider the classic example of Senator Vandenberg on American vulnerability to air attack. Prior to WWII, Senator Vandenberg had been of isolationist sentiment; he felt the ocean "moats" gave the United States special protection from the need European states had to defend themselves and get involved heavily in foreign affairs. In the 1930's, however, he also had occassion to discuss this view of American vulnerability with his nephew, Hoyt Vandenberg, who was a member of the Army Air Corps (he eventually became Air Chief of Staff). According to the Senator's son, the young officer argued vehemently with his uncle, "'That the airplane would be a dominant factor in any future wars'....I can recall many conversations in which the then junior officer...argued heatedly against my father's belief that the oceans were 'moats' protecting American from foreign wars. Pearl Harbor ended the argument." (Sen. Vandenberg Papers, Xix).

Some years after the attack, Senator Vandenberg wrote: "In my own mind, my convictions regarding international cooperation and collective security for peace took firm form on the afternoon of the Pearl Harbor attack. That day ended isolationism for any realist." His conversion to a more activist stand was not quite as sudden as that diary entry would indicate (he still believed immediately after the attack that a different neutrality stance might have kept us out of WWII), his change of mind occured more gradually during the span of the war. Evidently, however, the attack did destroy his belief in the ocean moats. Once that critical assumption was gone, other views changed as events proffered their opportunities and dangers.

The sides of the vulnerability issue represented by the two Vandenbergs represent rather well the basic division in the nation during the interwar period. Figure 1 offers a summary of the Army Air Corps, Navy, and civilian views of vulnerability to attack and what to do about it. Pearl Harbor did not seem to change the overall orientation of the airmen, but it did alter the perceptions of important civilians. The example of vulnerability may be quite unusual in that the sides of the issue were so clearly delineated that an event really could "falsify" the central tenet of the dominant, no-vulnerability school of thought.

At this point, the researcher needs to refine the data through further analysis of the lessons on a variety of dimensions. I used five dimensions: content, target mappings, statistical logic, problem-solving logic, and external social validity. Taken together they provide a broader picture for assessing lessons than does one that relies on content and statistical logic. By giving consideration to all the dimensions one both overcomes the inherent limitations of psychological research and keeps the politics in the analysis.

Figure 1
Interwar Views on Vulnerability

Army Air Corps
Threat: air attack
Assumption: US vulnerable to air attack.
Strategy: Defeat other's air force. If necessary, destroy enemy's industrial capacity. Capacity to do either will deter war.
Implementation of Strategy: Bring airpower to bear with bombers and fighters.
Consequences of above: Battles fought over own or enemy's territory. Failure to prepare may lead to defeat.
Policy choice: Build a strong air force based on bombers. don't waste money on a large army or navy.

Navy
Threat: Enemy Navy
Assumption: Only threat to US is seaborne
Strategy: Defeat other nation's fleet; capacity to do so will deter war.
Implementation: Bring firepower to bear with battleships
Consequences of Above: Battles fought away from US. shores; naval battles will be decisive.
Policy Choice: Builld strong navy based on battleships. Don't waste money on large army or on carriers or on air corps.

General Civilian View
Threat: None likely, possible sea-borne danger to coasts.
Assumption: Oceans protect U.S. from ready attack.
Strategy: Provide for navy, small army
Stay out of international affairs when possible
Consequences of Above: No need for large military, especially not air power, which looks like it could be offensive weapon if it were ever to become a viable technology.
Policy choice: Build navy, (but seek naval arms limitations); use army for coastal and border defense.

Content refers, as one would expect, to how much information about the past event is kept in the lesson. A lesson like "radar warning may not prevent surprise" is unexceptional, but well within the content bounds of the Pearl Harbor experience. Of greater interest, and of higher content, would be an entire paragraph on radar, Pearl Harbor, and warning. Through the use of the issue history, one could learn a great deal more about radar warning and the attack. Radar had just been installed at Opana and neither the men nor the officers were fully trained on the equipment. The Opana station reported blips, but were told by the officer in charge to ignore them and close down. The officer knew that B-17s were due in, so that's what he thought the men were seeing. The men did not think to report the direction of the blips or the size; the officer did not ask. Radar warning might have prevented surprise had there been proper training. Therefore well-equipped and well-trained radar operators are needed if tactical warning is to be provided in a timely manner. This information was known to the many individuals who investigated the Pearl Harbor attack.

But as currently stated, it is not a full scale lesson, because it is incompletely linked to a specific problem and policy recommendation for solving the problem. Here is where one really looks at the match between the lesson and a current problem. Target mappings relate a past event to a new event or problem. They take into consideration whether attributes from the source (past) event seem to be matched to features of the target (new) event. Let's assume the target problem in the previous paragraph is the acquisition of tactical warning. Relevant data from the source event are used to make a generalization about the target problem. It would be an even better mapping, if it went on to to say that radar warning may not be recognized when alternate explanations are available (the B-17s), therefore establish procedures for responding to radar information.

Target mappings help us determine the degree to which information from the source event has been used to structure a policy problem. A low value (I have yet to develop a sure way to decide whether the value is low or high; at present I still make judgment calls) indicates that the reference is being made to arouse political interest, not to structure an issue. For instance, the danger of an "economic Pearl Harbor" does not map because there is no source content and the target issue is quite diffuse.

Nor would we count as a target mapping discussions on how the past event was caused unless the conclusions are then turned into policy recommendations. One cause of surprise at Pearl was Gen. Marshall's refusal to use an unsecure telephone to warn Gen. Short about the 13-Part message from Japan formally breaking off relations. Unless this is turned into a rule about telephone calls in specified emergencies, it is not a mapping (and in this case, there does not appear to have been such a rule created). In a related vein, we would not count as mappings principles from the source event

not tied to a specific policy. The statement, "we should prevent Pearl Harbors by improving defense" is not a mapping. Paul Nitze's statement to a college audience that we should prevent Pearl Harbors by building SDI does count as a mapping, but it would not be as strong a mapping as the radar warning example.

In my experience, mappings and high levels of content tend to the prosaic. These are the bread-and-butter uses of the past. High content statements in policy documents tend to occur in close temporal proximity to the source event. Strong mappings tend to occur when the policy problem is limited in scope, but amorphous with respect to solution.

The third dimension for assessment, formal or statistical logic, relates to the point made earlier that many assessments of the quality of decisiomaking rely on psychological studies of decisional heuristics. People often make errors of logic. By an error I mean a deviation from a normative model of reason, for instance a failure to consider the statistical base rate for the occurrence of a phenomenon (Funder, 1987). It is not a bad idea to use one or more formal or statistical logical criteria in the assessment of lessons. The base rate idea is, to my mind, potentially the most useful. People tend to ignore baseline rates in favor of specific, but possibly non-diagnostic, information. For instance,Given information that a sample is 70% doctors and 30% lawyers, student subjects in psychology experiments have often been thrown off by specific information about the individuals in the sample (Nisbett and Ross, 1980; Holland et al, 1986). Although the best guess as to occupation is always to say doctor, subjects will routinely attempt to guess the occupation of a given individual from information about the person. Or, if asked for the probability that a given member of the sample is a lawyer, the subject might even say it's 50/50. Specific information overwhelms more general information.

This laboratory result contradicts the findings that decisionmakers overgeneralize. Rather than predicting too little attention to details, this logical error suggests decisionmakers may try to finesse judgments by basing them on individual, rather than aggregate, data. I rather suspect this is quite likely when the consequences of being wrong once, are exceptionally high. Statistically, it doesn't seem that nuclear wars arise from crises, but it just might be foolish and lethal to stick with the odds in any given crisis.

In the real world, moreover, assessing baselines turns out to be very difficult. Decisionmakers know perfectly well that many factors produce actions, and so it comes as no wonder that baseline-setting ends up low on their agendas. Very rarely did I find policymakers refering to how often major surprise attacks had occurred in the past. Sometimes blitzkrieg came up, but almost always in reference to European war, not the danger of surprise attack on the United States. I never found one that included the example of indian surprise attacks. Nevertheless, applying criteria from a normative model of rationality has its usefulness in assessing the quality of lessons from the past. Baseline rates for similar events, should establishing them be possible, could serve as a useful outside check on the amount of effort devoted by policymakers to rough estimates of how likely a given outcome is.

Decisionmakers do use events as elements in problem-solving, thus my dimension of problem solving logic. Four types of logic commonly appear: exemplar, principle, analogy and trend. In my view, the listing just given goes in ascending order from simplest to most complex.

An exemplar, as the name implies, is an example used to anchor an argument. Prior to Pearl Harbor, the airmen had a well-structured, but unanchored, argument about American vulnerability to air attack. Try as they might, however, few Americans believed their argument was sound--and for good reason. In contrast to the airpower argument, was the strong evidence from WWI and from the existing aircraft technology that airpower could not be used in a strategic fashion to shape the outcome of war. WWI aces had won their fame in battlefield encounters or in reconnaissance functions, not in bombing campaigns against the industrial might of Germany. Thus, the Army officially concluded that the role of airpower was troop support by keeping enemy aircraft from harrassing the troops and reconnaissance. In addition to the evidence from the Great War, there was the issue of potential enemies of the United States. Neither Canada nor Mexico posed any threat to the United States and only nations actually bordering the U.S. could bring airpower to bear, given the technology of the day. As President Coolidge so eloquently put it, "Who's gonna attack us'?

A principle is a guide to action. A principle drawn from history is statement about action plus a reference to an event. It comes closest to Zimmerman and Axelrod's definition of a lesson of history. In reference to the problem of vulnerable weapons, Senator John Kennedy wrote in a preface to Liddle Hart's, Deterrence or Defense, "'We have no right to tempt Soviet planners and political leaders with the possibility of catching our aircraft and unprotected missiles on the ground, in a gigantic Pearl Harbor..'" (as quoted in Freedman 1982, p 415). In many ways, the principle is also a mapping; but, as the discussion on mappings showed, not all principles are mappings.

Analogy as a reasoning technique, rather than a loose designation of any connection between one event and another, requires close attention to the similarities and differences between the past and present. Gen. Vandenberg, for instance, in explaining the Polar Concept--that the shortest distance between North America and Eurasia was over the North Pole--told a radio audience

> "I do not want to be misunderstood on this matter of the 'Polar concept.' Raids across the arctic could do much damage to American industry. They would not necessarily, however, in themselves bring about defeat of the United States so long as our people were determined and had made adequate advance preparation. The effect of such raids in the beginning of a war would be very similar to the effect on the Pacific War of the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor. By immobilizing our Pacific Fleet, the Japanese succeeded in gaining a time advantage of approximately eighteen months during which they were able to carry out their occupations of the Philippines, Malaya, and the Netherlands East Indies. Eventually, the United States fleet, by the power of American industry

and the determination of the people, was reconstituted and became what was probably the most powerful single factor in the final defeat of the Japanese," (Detroit Talk, April 1347, Vandenberg papers, Box 89, pp 14-15.

A trend consists of taking one feature of a given event and extrapolating it forward, and sometimes also backward, into time. Thus, today's events can be used to restructure the past and/or the past can organize the future. Generally speaking, a decisionmaker who draws trends backwards and forwards is engaged in more sophisticated reasoning than one who only looks forward, because this also entails a limited form of analogy. Trends are likely to be employed in problems with high levels of uncertainty and unclear boundaries. They may serve to generate data, not just modify it as in an analogy. One simple trend from Pearl Harbor was that any potential aggressor would also employ a surprise attack strategy against the United States. This trend was further amplified with the advent of nuclear weapons.

The last dimension to check is that of external social validity--do <u>other people</u> seem to think a lesson is reasonable. In political discourse the accuracy of a lesson will largely be determined by others, not by cold-blooded analysis of the level of factual content and statistical logic of the lesson. At the same time, however, the wider audience does constrain what's acceptable and logical. People would think it quite odd for a policymaker to say that the Battle of Gettysburg <u>caused</u> Pearl Harbor; but it was, in fact, permissible to connect the line from Lincoln's Gettysburg Address... "We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain..." with the tattered American flag of the Battleship Arizona and the admonition "Remember Dec. 7th!" on a wartime poster (original in National Archives). Or, to return to the example of the Army's attempt to use Pearl Harbor to justify a large, universal military training system, it proved unreasonable to others for the Army policymakers to claim that Pearl Harbor showed the value of land forces. Yet it was possible to use the event to strengthen the claim that airpower was essential and for advocates of bombers to gain political clout they had not had before.

If other events pop up along with the one under study, then it is likely that neither the event nor the lessons have high levels of external validity--there is public conflict over policy and over the appropriate lessons to be drawn from the past. If on a given problem different lessons from the same event are drawn, then the event has high external validity, even though the lessons may not.

Putting it Together

The problem-solving logics discussed serve important rhetorical functions that help increase the chances of believability by others. Exemplars help bolster an argument. Analogies and trends justify, explain, and legitimate. Bolstering uses exemplars to make a case persuasive; the

rhetorical aim is to show that a policy advocated in the past would have prevented or altered the outcome of the source event. This then leads the listener to the conclusion that the past preferred policy was correct and should be implemented. Columnist A. Krock of the New York Times noted on December 14, 1941 that General William "Billy" Mitchell had warned the nation about a Japanese surprise attack in the mid-1920s, but no one paid attention. For Krock, the attack on Pearl showed how the airmen had been right all along. Illustration 1 reproduces a remarkable 1924 cartoon on the Mitchell prophesy. The Army airmen through the period of reorganization of the defense establishment after WWII typically used bolstering with exemplars to make their case. Principles can also be used with exemplars to bolster an argument.

Principles, analogies, and trends help legitimate, explain, and justify policies (see Graber, 1981 and Vertzberger, 1986 for related analyses). An unpopular policy might be legitimated through the use of a principle: aggressors always use surprise, like the Japanese did at Pearl Harbor; we must build our defenses so no aggressor can take that risk.

Analogies and principles can explain what is going on, thus helping to justify a policy. Gen. Vandenberg told a radio audience that the nation must fear slipping "back into the prewar system that brought us to the brink of national disaster at Pearl Harbor." He refered to the Congressional Inquiry into the Pearl Harbor attack and then confided to his audience.

> "New sensations appear daily. New names fall under the shadow of blame. But for four years since December 7, 1941, the rugged common sense of the American people has known that the arch criminal was neither a man in blue, nor a man in khaki, but a system--the system which divided the responsibility for defending this country between two departments, which caused the command of an island the size of the District of Columbia to be divided between a Navy admiral following one set of orders and the Army general following another set of orders--the system which failed to train those men to work together, to understand each others' problems, and to follow a single leadership....it is that system which is on trial in the Pearl Harbor investigations" (Speech in Philadelphia on POW day, Broadcast by WPEN 15 Dec. 1945, Box 89, Gen. Vandenberg Papers, LOC).

Gen. Vandenberg continued by contrasting that hearing with the Unification hearings. "The encouraging thing about the whole matter is that in another room on Capitol Hill something is being done about it. The Military Affairs Committee in the Senate is considering a bill to join the Services together....(Ibid, p 2).

Vandenberg used a variety of strategies to convince his audience--not all of them entailing the use of the past. But

EDITORIAL and AMUSEMENT SECTION

The DAYTON [illegible] JOURNAL

OCTOBER 19, 1921

THIS WILL OCCUR UNLESS—

This Is Not an IMAGINARY Picture. It Is a Careful Drawing of an Actual Flying Machine, Built by German Mechanics in Denmark, Bought and Paid for by Japan, and Now on Its Way to Japan. The Japanese Are Building a Huge Fleet of These Machines, Many of Gigantic Size, Others Smaller, Swifter.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THEY MEAN TO DO WITH THESE AIR BATTLESHIPS?

Do You Imagine That They Are Intended for Use at Home in Japan or Against the Already Defeated Koreans? Don't Think So. Japan Is Building These Machines Because She Knows That Whoever Controls the AIR Can Control the WORLD, and She Means to Be Equipped for War When It Comes. Here, We're ASLEEP ON OUR PILE OF DOLLARS.

ILLUSTRATION 1

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

let's consider it in terms of the dimensions offered. It has a high level of content: much of the problem at Pearl did have to do with miscommunications and mismatched goals between the Departments of the Army and the Navy. This was also information his audience would have had ready access to, because there had been six investigations into the attack prior to the large and highly publicized Joint Congressional Investigation. Thus the chances are good that his discussion had high external social validity. The matching is good: past organizational methods were connected to the Pearl Harbor disaster, therefore a change in the methods used in the past--a unified defense department--will make for better defense. The formal logic was not good. He did not discuss alternate methods of defense organization (e.g. a real General Staff) or the organizational failures that led to surprise in other settings. He employed a variety of problem solving techniques. Pearl Harbor was the exemplar of everything wrong with defense organization; he did not say a thing about why it was that the nation managed to win the greatest war in the nation's history with the old-fashioned system. He created a specific principle: two departments lead to disaster. He did little analogical reasoning, in the sense I employ that concept. Solid analogical reasoning would have considered the ways in which the current problem would not fit the past case. In all, Vandenberg's use of the past was quite good, especially given his audience.

Let's consider another example of to see how trends and analogy are used. Paul Nitze authored the Strategic bombing Survey for Japan (and contributed to the European survey) and NSC-68. NSC-68 set the nation on the path to a large nuclear retaliatory force. In it, he argued that nuclear weapons would give the surprise attack new force, because nuclear surprise attacks might well lead to an immediate end to the war. Although many policymakers and scholars during the 1945-50 period, had noted the difference nuclear weapons made, Nitze was one of the earliest to think about the difference. In this he was, at least partially, influenced by the work in the Bombing Survey and by Pearl Harbor. While looking over the damage at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he sought to understand how big the atomic bomb was. Pearl Harbor came to mind. As he recalled, he tried to compare the damages at the two sites in order to calibrate the damage an atomic bomb could do. He asked himself how many conventional bombs, like at Pearl, it would have taken to do the damage the single bombs did in Japan. From that, he estimated the destructive power of the atomic weapon to be on the order of two or three magnitudes of damage greater than for conventional weapons (interview, 1984).

Nitze took two roughly known quantities and compared them--a basic form of analogy. What he wanted to know was not the exact number of sorties needed to attack Hiroshima and Nagasaki conventionally, but rather how big a difference there was between conventional and atomic weapons. The connection between the contents of the events and the

conclusion were warranted. The analogical logic of the analysis was appropriately limited and aided his understanding of the novel weapon.

Then, at the point of writing NSC-68, he took the data on the difference between atomic and conventional weapons to a new problem: what should the U.S. do as the Soviets build up their nuclear weapons stockpile? He concluded, as did other students of deterrence, that the next war would certainly begin with surprise attack on a scale far larger than that of Pearl Harbor; he concluded that the United States had to deter aggression by threatening response in kind. Here, his connection to the facts of Pearl Harbor became more tenuous, but his connection to the results of his earlier analysis of the destructiveness of atomic bombs held. Essentially Nitze took the extreme destruction of atomic weapons understood through the analogy to Pearl Harbor, and drew a trend backwards to Pearl Harbor. Had Japan the atomic bomb, the damage would certainly have been much worse for the US and would have taken less Japanese effort. His next step was to take that result and draw a trend forward to a potential aggressive move by the Soviets. If Pearl Harbor would have been worse for the US, but easier for Japan, then would not the same relationship hold for the Soviets?

Nitze learned about the bomb with the aid of Pearl Harbor. He could not have had an opinion on atomic weapons prior to Pearl Harbor, of course, but the attack did help him understand what the novel weapon was all about. That learning was put to use to conceptualize the emerging problem of Soviet nuclear capabilities and to advocate a particular policy.

There were other surprise attacks to consider, and Nitze did not do that, so assessment on the formal logic dimension would yield a low score. So, for that matter, would the content dimension; very little of Pearl Harbor is contained in Nitze's long line of reasoning. But its problem-solving logic was excellent; the "destructiveness" factor was a very good use of analogy. The inference about what an intelligent enemy might do militarily, developed through the extrapolation of a trend on the utility of surprise, was quite plausible. It's clear how the inference was made. The way he handled Pearl Harbor, the bomb, and future danger, moreover, shows a clear awareness that he was not expecting another Pearl Harbor; he was expecting a giant, nuclear Pearl Harbor. Nitze had factored the bomb into his analysis; he was not overgeneralizing a lesson from Pearl Harbor, he was noting the limits of Pearl Harbor. As for external social validity, his use of Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima both must receive high marks. His view was shared by many scholars and policy makers--his arguments made perfect sense given the discussions of the day and experience.

Conclusion

Decisionmakers do not use history all that poorly when the political context and the actual content of lessons are taken into account. They do not seem to overgeneralize or oversimplify; if anything the opposite occurs. Decisionmakers do pay attention to current context and that context, not the past, heavily influences the uses of the past.

Simplification arises of necessity; after all one solves puzzles step-by-step, not all at once. In this regard, research into how policymakers solve ambiguous and complex problems with help from the past may aid psychological researchers. One way simplification seems to work is by taking one aspect of a problem and amplifying it. This finding is consistent with the description Keith Holyoak (1984) makes about scientific inter and intra domain analogies (pp 206-209). The logic may not be correct in a Bayesian sense, but it works well quite often.

Decisionmakers do use history to prop up their prejudices, but the prejudices are often shared by others. That makes the implementation of policy practical and possible. Even in settings of public talk with citizens, policymakers must acknowledge general opinions about what happened in a past event, while at the same time structuring the past event in such a way as to lead the citizenry to desired inferences about current policy.

It will not do to adopt uncritically the findings from psychology about how people reason, remember, and judge. Those findings are derived from the laboratory, and the real world is far more complex than any laboratory experiment. Indeed, the context and knowledge subjects bring to the lab may overwhelm any apparent effects of the experimental stimulus. As Donald Funder (1987) put it, "The criteria for evaluating social judgment reside not in the lab, where all you can study is the process, but in the world, where their content is (p 87)." Political scientists interested in political psychology ought to use their cases not to ratify laboratory findings, but to discover how policymakers do learn, reason, and communicate about public, political matters.

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